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ABSTRACT

Literacy--the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and think effectively--enables adolescents to learn and to communicate clearly in and out of school. Adolescents need to have strong literacy skills so that they can understand academic content, communicate in a credible way, participate in cultural communities, and negotiate the world. The standards movement asserts that all students should understand content at deeper, more complex levels than have been advocated previously for any but the most advanced students. A variety of teaching and learning strategies have been shown to be effective in assisting adolescent learners to develop their capacity as readers and writers. Nevertheless, according to this paper, there is an "ever-deepening crisis in adolescent literacy." The paper considers how effective content-based literacy instruction can be brought to life in the classroom in ways that will make a positive difference for students. It discusses the following questions: Why are educational practitioners and policymakers concerned about adolescent literacy now? What recent developments have taken place on the national and state levels? What would a successful approach to improving adolescent literacy include? What is the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework? How does the Framework address the needs of all students? What does adolescent literacy development look like at the classroom level? How will adolescent literacy across the curriculum improve test scores? and What do educational leaders need to know? (Contains 21 references.) (NKA)

Supporting Adolescent Literacy across the Content Areas. Perspectives on Policy and Practice

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Supporting Adolescent Literacy Across the Content Areas

"Reading is a different task when we read literature, science texts, historical analyses, newspapers, tax forms. This is why teaching students how to read the texts of academic disciplines is a key part of teaching them these disciplines."

(Key Ideas of the Strategic Literacy Initiative, 2001)

Literacy - the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and think effectively - enables adolescents to learn and to communicate clearly in and out of school. Being literate enables people to access power through the ability to become informed, to inform others, and to make informed decisions. Adolescents need to have strong literacy skills so that they can understand academic content, communicate in a credible way, participate in cultural communities, and negotiate the world. In addition to a cultural component, therefore, building literacy addresses empowerment and equity issues.

The standards movement asserts that all students should understand content at deeper, more complex levels than have been advocated previously for any but the most advanced students. For students to construct meaning and derive usefulness from what they learn, they must be able to retain important information, understand topics and concepts deeply, and actively apply knowledge (Perkins, 1992). Reading and writing play a crucial role in the ability to "learn for understanding" (Graves, 1999; Graves, 2000).

What happens, as is often the case, when literacy skills are too weak to support learning in content areas? At the middle school and high school levels, literacy skills must become increasingly sophisticated to meet more challenging academic expectations. The ability to transact meaning from the academic text of different disciplines is often not directly taught, with the consequence of failure to comprehend those academic topics. For example, if students can't understand a scientific argument, then they can't understand the science that they're trying to learn. If students can't understand how history is presented, they can't understand the points being made or connect those to what is happening in the present. If these literacy skills are not fluent due to lack of practice and inappropriate instruction, all but the most advanced readers and writers are placed at a disadvantage.

Research in this important area suggests the direction that improvement efforts must take. We know some of the ways to reach reluctant readers and writers. We know a variety of teaching and learning strategies that have been shown to be effective in assisting adolescent learners to develop their capacity as readers and writers. We know that enhancing literacy skills will improve learning in the content areas (NRP Report, 2000). Despite this knowledge, there is a lack of implementation of known strategies and an "ever-deepening crisis in adolescent literacy" (IRA, 1999). How can we bring effective content-based literacy instruction to life in the classroom in ways that will make a positive difference for students?

Why are educational practitioners and policymakers concerned about adolescent literacy now?

Nationwide poor performance

The 1998 Reading Report Card by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that barely a majority of U.S. adolescents (approximately 60%) could comprehend factual statements. Even more alarming were the results showing that fewer than 5% could elaborate on the meanings of the materials they read. Additionally, the NAEP writing assessments indicated that few adolescents could write effective pieces with sufficient details to support main points.

Added demands of new technologies

The literacy demands that adolescents will face as twenty-first century workers and citizens far exceed what has been required in the past (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 1999). They will encounter a world already filled with new types of information systems, new modes of communication, presentation, and publication, and wide access to technologies that support new ways of managing, analyzing, developing, and monitoring information. The infusion of technology into our communication systems worldwide brings with it the need to better understand how technology changes and extends literacy demands now and for the future (Luke & Elkins, 1998; Rycik & Irvin, 2001). However, many teachers are not technologically literate, many schools still have limited or unreliable technological capacity, and most educational systems are not adequately preparing students to develop the types and levels of literacy necessary to truly capitalize on technology as a teaching and learning tool.

Pressure from the standards movement

It has always been the case that "beyond the primary grades, students need to grapple with texts that are expository, dense, and full of new, more difficult vocabulary, especially in math, science, and social studies" (Allen, 2000). Until recently, a student's experience with these more challenging texts depended largely on his or her level of literacy skills. Now, statewide standards, accountability, and the public disclosure of low-performing schools have increased the pressure on high

schools to raise scores and to improve other measures of performance among all students. Thus, the challenge includes and reaches far beyond remedial reading (although adolescent remedial reading programs are chronically under-funded). Add to this the distinct literacy needs of increasing numbers of English Language Learners attending high schools throughout the United States. At the heart of this performance requirement is a student's literacy – his or her ability to understand and to use language to master content areas.

Inconsistent instructional practices

Research over the past ten years demonstrates that student performance at the high school level can improve when teachers infuse their content-focused instruction with literacy support. However, another barrier to literacy is that many high school teachers maintain the assumption that their job is to focus on content areas, not to teach reading or writing, and many feel that they lack the expertise to teach reading. Consequently, many teachers end up planning content instruction so that it minimizes reading and writing instruction (Allen, 2000; Cziko, 1998), and without the key support and practice opportunities needed to strengthen skills, students end up reading and writing less.

The complexity of teaching reading strategies to high school students is clear. It is equally clear that very few high school students are currently receiving such instruction. A review of promising practices shows that efforts tend to be sporadic and dependent on individual teacher efforts. As a result, it is often only the best students who are taught how to analyze, synthesize, debate, present, and evaluate information from multiple sources – the very skills that average and weaker students need for academic success. Without continued and systemic literacy focus, all but strong readers and writers will have difficulty meeting the literacy demands inherent in state content standards.

What recent developments have taken place on the national and state levels?

Policy response

Despite the enormous national and Presidential attention to reading and despite the higher failure

Developments on the National Level

Seven Principles for Supporting Adolescents' Literacy Growth

The International Reading Association (IRA) Commission on Adolescent Literacy Position Statement advocates that:

- Adolescents deserve access to a wide variety of reading material that they can and want to read.
- Adolescents deserve instruction that builds both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials.
- Adolescents deserve assessment that shows them their strengths as well as their needs and that guides their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers.
- Adolescents deserve expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum.
- Adolescents deserve reading specialists who assist individual students having difficulty learning how to read.
- Adolescents deserve teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences, and respond to their characteristics.
- Adolescents deserve homes, communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed.

The 1999 IRA Adolescent Literacy Position Statement can be found at: <http://www.reading.org/pdf/1036.pdf>

rates among older students on national and state reading and writing tests, no policies address adolescent literacy at the national level. The International Reading Association (IRA) reports that state and federal funding for adolescent reading programs in the United States has decreased.

In 1999, The International Reading Association (IRA) Commission for Adolescent Literacy developed a position statement to respond to "the ever-deepening crisis in adolescent literacy" and to begin to offset the disproportionate attention and resources dedicated to early literacy. The position statement advocates seven principles for supporting adolescents' literacy growth. There is some evidence that the IRA's position statement and findings have helped to bring attention to the issue.

Some further examples of positive steps include the RAND study, *Reading for Understanding: Towards an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension* (January 2001), which recommends increased research and development resources for this important area. More and more, professional development resources are being used to help secondary teachers learn what they need to know to support literacy across the curriculum. The U.S. Department of Education is funding adolescent literacy initiatives. One such project is the online communication of effective practices via a Spotlight on Adolescent Literacy on The Knowledge Loom, a Web site dedicated to education reform. The Knowledge Loom was developed by the Northeast Regional Educational Laboratory (LAB), a program of the Education Alliance at Brown University. Content for the Spotlight was provided by LAB partner, The Center for Resource Management (CRM). The Spotlight can be accessed at: <http://knowledgeloom.org/adlit>

Recent efforts by state and by district

Some states have been able to address high school literacy through Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) legislation and funding, low-performing schools legislation, or secondary-school reform initiatives.

Developments on the State Level

Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students

In 1998, the Maine Department of Education Commission on Secondary Education developed a report for Commissioner Albanese. The report, *Promising Futures: A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students*, recommends an ambitious approach to learning that takes as its goal the attainment of the Maine Learning Results for all Maine youth. Its purpose is to generate creative, student-responsive, and forward-thinking instruction and school organization. *Promising Futures* recommends steps that policymakers and leaders beyond the school can take to encourage and support secondary school improvement.

The 1998 *Promising Futures* report is available at: <http://www.state.me.us/education/cse/csees.htm>

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Project (CSRD)

The nine research-based components of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Project (CSRD) are:

- 1) Effective research-based methods and strategies
- 2) Comprehensive design with aligned components
- 3) Professional development
- 4) Measurable goals and objectives
- 5) Support within the school
- 6) Parent and community involvement
- 7) External technical support and assistance
- 8) Evaluation strategies
- 9) Coordination of resources

Available at: http://www.lab.brown.edu/public/csr/csrdf.taf?function=detail&Layout_0_uid1=CSR00CO

When given the choice, many educators have chosen to focus on literacy in their proposals and action plans. Maine's state department of education has obtained a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to work exclusively at the secondary level with its CSRD funding. At the state level, the Maine Department of Education has made adolescent literacy a focus of secondary school reform statewide. Maine's Center for Inquiry into Secondary Education is collaborating with the Northeast Regional Educational Laboratory (LAB) and LAB partner, The Center for Resource Management (CRM). Their project will assist high schools to use the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework to develop coherent school-wide literacy support programs. The planned five-year initiative includes a research component and builds on Maine's 1998 Promising Futures report.

Some local districts have developed their own policies and are in the early stages of implementing systemic adolescent literacy initiatives. The El Monte School District in East Los Angeles County is integrating literacy and leadership best practices into the CSRD programs of three high schools. Two other districts recently carried out their own investigations of the research in the area of secondary literacy and developed comprehensive literacy plans. The plans include detailed descriptions of the roles of administrators, teachers, and reading specialists, and

the organizational support structures that they plan to employ. They are available at: http://www.mcsd.org/Report_files/secondary.pdf and <http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/langarts/hsread.htm#commitment>.

What would a successful approach to improving adolescent literacy include?

Need for a comprehensive approach

Studies suggest that successful secondary initiatives would require a school-wide focus. "Although research-based reading strategies may be applied in schools on a piecemeal basis, some researchers believe that success in solving older students' comprehension problems depends on their inclusion in a strategic framework that will move students to a deeper understanding of the information they read" (Allen, 2000).

To assist those attempting to improve adolescent literacy at both the classroom and the school-wide level, CRM examined the literature from several relevant fields, including cognitive psychology, English Language Arts instruction and assessment, linguistics, motivation theory, English as a Second Language, education, and discourse analysis. The findings suggest that effective support results from a threefold approach:

- 1) careful attention to the social and motivational issues attendant to adolescent learners,
- 2) explicit teaching and use of cognitive strategies, and
- 3) integration of literacy instruction with content-area learning in ways that support teaching and learning in that discipline.

These must be supported through appropriate organizational structures such as adequate professional development, scheduling, and course development. As in every successful educational reform initiative, leadership is key.

What is the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework?

One strategy for improving adolescent literacy, developed by CRM, is the Adolescent Literacy

Support Framework — a research-based framework designed to bridge the divide between research and practice in this area. The Framework provides teachers and administrators with a comprehensive overview of what needs to be addressed to effectively support adolescent literacy development. Improving literacy schoolwide using the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework necessitates putting into place all four Key Components: motivation; research-based strategies; application across the curriculum; and organizational support.

Key Component A: Motivation

Address student motivation and engagement in learning

Literacy clearly has social and cultural attributes. Research strongly suggests that school and classroom cultures play large roles in whether or not adolescents develop positive literacy identities (McCombs & Barton, 1998). Students who have experienced repeated failure at reading are often unwilling to participate as readers or writers. Attention to how to meet the social and emotional needs of adolescents in learning situations is correlated with how motivated students are to further develop their literacy skills and engage in reading and writing. School and classroom cultures that successfully promote the development of adolescent literacy skills are characterized by connections, interaction, and responsiveness, which lead to student engagement and reflection (Collins, 1997; Davidson & Koppenhauer, 1991; Krogness, 1995; Moore, et al., 2000; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997; Wilhelm, 1995).

Key Component B: Strategies

Integrate research-based literacy strategies

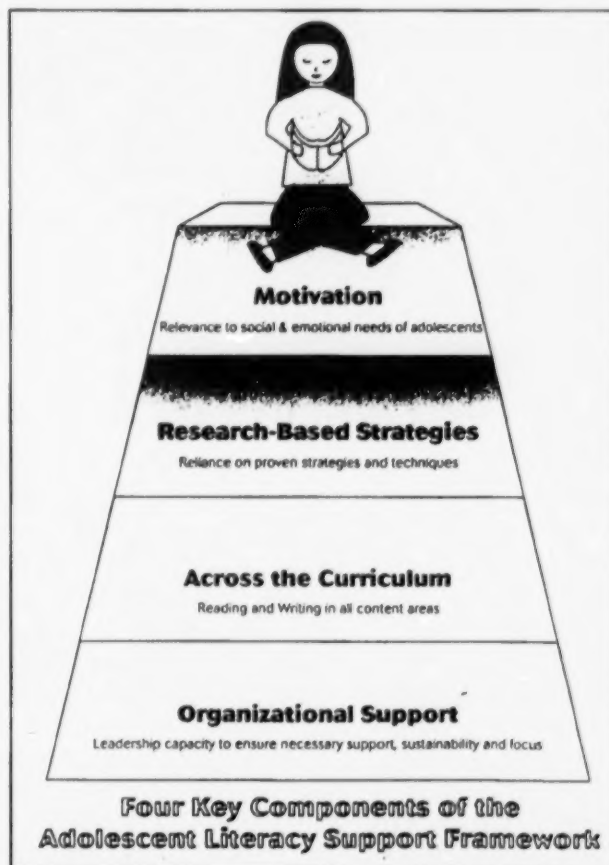
Adolescents “must learn to think about the complexities of the reading process and then actively apply appropriate strategies” (Allen, 2000). They must, therefore, learn the literacy strategies, be given time to practice and apply them to a variety of contexts, and subsequently use them for learning in the content areas. A growing body of research examines the differences in the metacognitive skills of good vs. poor readers (Schoenbach et al, 1999; Wilhelm, 1995; and others). The research suggests a

menu of best practices that together constitute good instruction for developing adolescent literacy.

Key Component C: Across the Curriculum

Integrate reading and writing across the curriculum

“Reading is a different task when we read literature, science texts, historical analyses, newspapers, tax forms. This is why teaching students how to read the texts of academic disciplines is a key part of teaching them these disciplines” (Key Ideas of the Strategic Literacy Initiative, 2001). The literacy demands of different content areas vary substantially (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995), and the research clearly supports the use of a variety of comprehension strategies to enhance learning in the content areas (Haller et. al., 1988; NRP Report, 2000). Effective content-based vocabulary instruction, understanding of text structures, and discourse analysis all play key roles in assisting students to maximize content-area reading, writing, and understanding.



The Adolescent Literacy Support Framework with its Four Key Components

Key Component A: Motivation

A successful adolescent literacy initiative takes into account the social and emotional needs of adolescents.

- Instruction makes connections to students' lives.
- Students interact with each other and with texts.
- Teachers create responsive classrooms.

Key Component B: Literacy Strategies

A successful adolescent literacy initiative uses research-based approaches to adolescent teaching and learning.

- Teachers guide and engage student learning in optimal ways.
- Teachers create and promote student-centered classrooms.
- Students develop reading and writing through purposeful uses of time.
- Students develop speaking and listening skills through shared and collaborative learning.
- Students gain higher order thinking and metacognitive skills.

Key Component C: Across the Curriculum

A successful adolescent literacy initiative supports reading and writing to learn in each/all of the content areas.

- Students develop vocabulary in relevant contexts and through engaging activities.
- Students develop understanding of text structures.
- Students develop recognition and analysis of discourse features.
- Teachers support learning in the *English* classroom by integrating discipline-specific literacy development.
- Teachers support learning in the *math* classroom by integrating discipline-specific literacy development.
- Teachers support learning in the *science* classroom by integrating discipline-specific literacy development.
- Teachers support learning in the *social studies* classroom by integrating discipline-specific literacy development.

Key Component D: Organizational Support

A successful adolescent literacy initiative relies on key organizational structures and leadership capacity to ensure necessary support, sustainability, and focus.

- The initiative meets the agreed upon goals for adolescents in that particular community.
- The initiative articulates, communicates, and actualizes a vision of literacy as a priority.
- The initiative employs best practices in the area of systemic educational reform.
- The initiative is defined in a way that connects to the larger educational program.
- The initiative provides focused and sustained teacher professional development.
- The initiative has a clear process for program review, improvement, and evaluation.

Key Component D: Organizational Support

Build organizational and leadership capacity for sustained and focused literacy

Experience with high school educational reform models (e.g., Coalition for Effective Schools; Breaking Ranks; Career Academies) reiterates the principle that implementing and sustaining change in secondary schools requires a host of organizational and leadership structures specific to the ongoing initiative. Studies show that secondary school restructuring efforts, where the necessary organizational supports and leadership capacities are not in place, tend to be short-lived; they also contribute to high levels of teacher frustration, stress, and burnout on the part of teachers charged with implementing change (Nolan & Meister, 2000). To date, although the link between adolescent literacy development and better content-area achievement is clear, few systemic high school literacy initiatives have been carried out beyond the planning and initial implementation stages.

The components of the successful adolescent literacy initiative are designed to be integral to the larger educational program in order to infuse the whole and add to its coherence. To ensure continued success and maximum responsiveness, there are ongoing cycles of

- 1) examining outcomes and results,
- 2) reviewing and improving program components,
- 3) seeking participant feedback, and
- 4) implementing improvements.

Each Key Component has associated best practices, which are featured on The Knowledge Loom's Spotlight on Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas. The Spotlight provides suggested strategies and resources, snapshots of successful practice, policy links, questions to think about, an expert panel, research summaries and bibliographies, and a host of other support resources to assist educators in optimizing their use of the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework to change teaching and learning in their schools.

How does the Framework address the needs of all students?

The standards movement mandates quality educational experiences that support all students in

meeting and exceeding content-area standards. The Adolescent Literacy Support Framework is designed to reflect best practices in teaching and learning for all students. Key Components A, B, and C are based upon the research on successful practices with struggling, average, and advanced students. Further, the Framework takes into account the latest research about what works with English Language Learners. Thus, by implementing all of the components of the Framework, teachers and administrators will support academic success for a wide variety of learners.

What does adolescent literacy development look like at the classroom level?

How would the application of these strategies be different from what we see now in content-area classrooms? The following excerpts from recent publications give a glimpse of what Components A, B, and C look like "in action" at the classroom level.

Integrating literacy and literature as an apprenticeship

The following is an adaptation of a story written by Christine Cziko, a former high school English teacher from San Francisco. It originally appeared in California English (Vol. 3, no. 4, 1998) as "Reading Happens in Your Mind, Not in Your Mouth: Teaching & Learning 'Academic Literacy' in an Urban High School." The full article, in its original form, can be found at: <http://www.WestEd.org/stratlit/prodevel/happens.shtml>

We thought that if we could create classrooms in which students could use some of the energy they put into hiding what they don't understand into revealing and working to figure out their confusions, we might create a powerful new learning dynamic. We thought about ways to make it "cool" to be able to articulate what in a particular text is confusing and why, and we considered how to invite the entire class to contribute strategies to unlock difficult text. The model was: teachers as "master readers" and students as "apprentice readers." It was not a remedial course.

We began by reading works by authors, including Martin Luther King, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Frederick Douglass, writing about the role of reading in their lives. They explored questions such as, "What roles does

reading serve in people's personal and public lives?" The students were also prompted to think about their own relationship to reading, reflecting on questions such as, "What are my characteristics as a reader?" and "What strategies do I use as I read?"

We also read and discussed articles that provided a common conceptual vocabulary for thinking about one's own cognitive processes. Students learned about schema, metacognition, and attention management. The following comment illustrates how students internalized some of these ideas and strategies:

In Academic Literacy, they taught you about different channels of your brain. Like my teacher would say, "You have one channel for being with your friends, and one channel for getting dressed, and you have a channel for being in school." And so then we would be supposed to ask ourselves, "What channel am I on now? Am I on my school channel?"

Another key element was in our modified version of Silent Sustained Reading. Books were self-selected, but students were expected to finish a 200-page book each month and keep a record of both what they were reading and what they were learning about themselves as readers. They were introduced to and given frequent opportunities to practice a variety of cognitive and "text-wise" strategies: including questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting; using graphic organizers; and breaking sentences into manageable parts.

Literacy across the high school curriculum

The following descriptions are excerpted from "How School Leaders Can Support Successful Secondary Content Area Literacy," an article published in the October 2001 issue of *Principal Leadership*, and written by Julie Meltzer (The Center for Resource Management) and Sidney Okashige (The Education Alliance at Brown University).

Supporting Literacy Development in the MATH Classroom

A secondary math classroom that supports literacy development uses language processes to enhance understanding and to demonstrate understanding. Especially with word problems, teachers model problem-solving through thinking aloud, and students articulate,

verbally or in writing, how they solve problems. Students and teachers develop concepts actively. They make frequent use of word play and connections to real-life applications. They also use varied and flexible grouping, team construction, and presentation of responses to problematic scenarios requiring mathematical solutions.

Supporting Literacy Development in the SCIENCE Classroom

In secondary science classrooms where literacy development is a priority, reading, writing, and discussion happen on a daily basis. Students and teachers build and expand understandings through the use of many kinds of texts, including the reading and analysis of essays, journal articles, Web sites, textbooks, and science fiction. Teachers support reading comprehension through electronic media, film, laboratory experiences, and visuals. Students actively construct and reinforce meanings of specialized vocabulary and make explicit use of textbook features. They also develop hypothesis, prediction, analysis, and description skills in verbal and written forms. Students are able to use the writing process to strengthen lab reports, analytic writing, solutions to problem sets, and research findings. Teachers use active inquiry, and students expect to read and conduct scientific research as the fabric of teaching and learning. Students frequently present and discuss their findings, ideas, and questions.

Supporting Literacy Development in the SOCIAL STUDIES Classroom

In a secondary Social Studies classroom that supports literacy development, students and teachers use a wide variety of resources, including reproductions of primary sources in texts, kits, or Web sites, (diary entries, newspaper accounts, maps, inventories, photographs, film, and historical fiction), to develop understandings of eras, places, and events. They make use of explicit textbook features, use specialized vocabulary in classroom discussion and student writing, and investigate the thinking and approaches of social studies specialists (e.g., anthropologists, archaeologists, economists, social historians, sociologists). They actively participate in the framing and exploration of essential questions. They make frequent connections between eras, events, famous and infamous people, different representations of the same

or similar events, and the past and present. They examine how languages develop and how language is used, both by those in power and by those who resist, as part of historical, cultural, geographic, and psychological studies. Students discuss, present, and debate. They use research skills. They are grouped in various ways for different kinds of assignments, and their interests are taken into consideration.

How will adolescent literacy across the curriculum improve test scores?

Putting into place all four research-based Key Components of the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework should improve and sustain performance on standards-based state accountability tests. Students who are motivated and engaged learn more and practice more. Students who can use reading and writing strategies effectively to learn content know more and can think critically and respond analytically to material presented to them. Students who have experienced teaching and learning in which they have developed the practice of interacting with subject matter will retain more of that content.

Teachers who experience high-quality, ongoing professional development and who are provided adequate time for ongoing teacher collaboration centered on the examination of student work can improve their ability to support literacy development across the curriculum. Thus, through implementing the Adolescent Literacy Support Framework, high schools can become more focused on essential higher-order learning outcomes across the content areas leading to improved student performance on tests.

Along the way to higher test scores, there are two important reminders. The position statement of the International Reading Association's Adolescent Literacy Commission states, "Adolescents deserve assessment that shows them their strengths as well as their needs and that guides their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers." Rather than looking to instruction to improve test scores, test scores must serve to improve instruction. Adolescents deserve classroom assessments that bridge the gap between what they know and are able to do and relevant curriculum standards; they

Position Statement on Measuring Success

Connecticut State Board of Education, 2000

A state that consistently scores high on the National Assessment of Educational Progress comments on the role of state test results in the context of setting standards, measuring success, reporting results, and improving instruction. This position statement cautions against overemphasis on the result of one test to evaluate the performance of a student, school, or district; that such a practice can result in an inappropriate narrowing of the curriculum and inappropriate classroom instructional practices.

Available at:

http://www.state.ct.us/sde/board/meas_success.pdf

deserve assessments that map a path toward continued literacy growth.

The second caution concerns the use of a high-stakes test. In its Position Statement On Measuring Success, the Connecticut State Board of Education (September 13, 2000) wrote,

Because success is multifaceted, it must be assessed using multiple measures [emphasis ours]: academic achievement over an extended period of time; student achievements that are other than academic; unique local indicators that represent community values; and the extent to which the performance gaps between various groups of students (by gender, race, economic status, etc.) are being reduced.

What do educational leaders need to know?

A broad study of successful compensatory literacy programs for adolescents concluded that important elements for success are:

- 1) vision and definition,
- 2) developmental responsiveness,
- 3) academic effectiveness,
- 4) access to the world of the written word, and
- 5) organization to ensure success for all.

(Davidson & Koppenhaver, 1991)

Key strategies for success in urban schools focus on the importance of quality and ongoing professional

development as a part of the life of the school, the need for high expectations for student achievement on everyone's part, ongoing support systems in place, and ongoing assessment of program effectiveness (Hodges, 1994).

In the case of a systemic adolescent literacy initiative, the quality, structure, and implementation of professional development can determine the success or failure of the initiative. These should include opportunities to learn new strategies, develop curriculum, meet collaboratively to improve practice, support and mentor one another, stay current on research, conduct action research, and review program and student success (Hodges, 1994; Joyce et al., 1999; Langer, 1999; Richardson, 2000).

Any comprehensive change requires leadership, support, and ownership by stakeholders. Orchestrating and sustaining these efforts requires sustained and stable leadership at the school and district levels over time (usually more than five years). Ongoing communication, ongoing professional development, data-driven decision making, participatory decision-making processes, and thoughtful, deliberate review sustain the endeavor. It is important to identify those likely to be most effective in developing and implementing an adolescent literacy initiative.

Certain "belief structures" must also be in place and must be sustained through action, messages from teachers and administrators, modeling, professional dialogue, and ongoing professional development. The literature stresses the need to believe that struggling readers and writers can succeed and that teachers and schools really have the power to transform lives (Bernard, 1997).

Conclusion

Literacy is the vehicle by which teenagers become fluent and active contributors to our global society. Considering the poor nationwide performance in literacy, the extension in literacy demands, and the misalignment between instructional methods and the standards for all learners, it is clear that new literacy strategies must be implemented. The Adolescent Literacy Support Framework offers a comprehensive approach based on research and practice; its application in the five-year plan with Maine schools will bring to light further strategies to continually improve the way schools equip adolescents to learn and to navigate the adult world.

A successful adolescent literacy initiative clearly reflects the values and literacy needs of its community. It follows that the goals and structure of the initiative and the message of literacy as a priority is broadly communicated and adequately supported by resources. Organizational structures and well-allocated resources must meet the effort's needs. This is an ongoing task throughout the life of the initiative so that it is taken seriously and supported by teachers, students, parents, community members, specialists, and administrators alike.

Imagine a high school with a successful literacy initiative: You would walk into the school environment, and it would feel exciting. It would look very different in terms of the level of interaction that was occurring between students and teachers, among the teachers themselves, and among the students. There would be books everywhere, there would be computers in use, there would be the use of writing for communication, and there would be petitions, letters, and posters that were generated to communicate messages that were important to the students. In classrooms, you might see presentations and audience critiques of presentations. You might see video or dramatic interpretations. The issue is not that these things are not occurring in high schools. The issue is that if high schools were succeeding in terms of supporting literacy, these would be occurring all the time, not just as special projects or one-time occasions. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening would be the lifeblood of the high school, through which all manner of content was explored, and everyone would be engaged in the learning process.

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PERSPECTIVES on Policy and Practice

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